

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 29, 2004

The Honorable Richard Cheney
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice-President Cheney:

On Tuesday, the United States Senate is scheduled to vote on re-authorizing the Assault Weapons Ban of 1994. The whip count is extremely close and there is a very real possibility that the Senate will be deadlocked, 50-50. In your role as President of the Senate, you may be called upon to cast the tie-breaking vote and I am writing to respectfully urge you to vote in its favor.

During the 2000 campaign, President Bush committed to supporting a straight re-authorization of the Assault Weapons Ban. While that commitment has been reiterated in recent months by the White House, the Administration took steps this week to break that pledge by issuing a Statement of Administration Policy opposing any amendments to S. 1805, the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. As you are well aware, S. 1805 is the most viable vehicle for passing the Assault Weapons Ban before it expires this September.


I expect that should there be a tie vote on the Assault Weapons Ban, you will fulfill the President's commitment to re-authorizing this important public safety legislation and cast the tie-breaking vote. I further trust that you will be in Washington and available on Tuesday should that vote be needed.

The Assault Weapons Ban has been an effective crime-fighting tool, reducing the proportion of banned assault weapons traced to crimes by 65.8% since 1995, according to data from the Department of Justice. In 1995, the first year that the ban went into effect, assault weapons represented 3.57 percent of all crime guns recovered from crimes. By 2002, assault weapons represented only 1.22 percent of the number of guns used in crimes.

The Assault Weapons Ban is supported by top law enforcement organizations, including the Fraternal Order of Police, which has more than 310,000 members in more than 2,100 lodges. In addition, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major City Chiefs, the National Association of Police Organizations, the National Organization of Black Police Officials, the International Brotherhood of Police Officers, the Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association, and the American Probation and Parole Association all support the ban.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator